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Review of the efficiency of the administrative and financial functioning of the United Nations

Overseas Properties Management and Information Exchange Network (OPMIEN): a globally coordinated collaborative approach to facilities management

Report of the Secretary-General**

Summary

The Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions, in its reports to the General Assembly on the proposed programme budgets for 1996-1997 (A/50/7), 1998-1999 (A/52/7) and 2000-2001 (A/54/7) recommended that Headquarters maintain a coordinating role for an overview of all United Nations facilities with regard to their physical condition, property valuations, facilities-related contracts, efficiency measures, maintenance and alterations/improvement projects and environmental concerns.

To facilitate such coordination of common concerns related to facilities management, the Office of Central Support Services at United Nations Headquarters is proposing an Organization-wide collaborative team of professionals from each duty station, called the "Overseas Properties Management Information Exchange Network (OPMIEN)". The purpose of such a collaborative team would be to regularly network and exchange information on best practices, common approaches and policy directives that would enhance the safety, reliability, efficiency and operations of the facilities while integrating into the buildings infrastructure the evolving technological innovations.

* A/55/150.

** This report required input and extensive review by the United Nations Offices at Geneva, Nairobi and Vienna, the International Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia, the regional commissions, and local funds and programmes. This review process took an extra six weeks, which delayed the submission of the report.

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The present report provides the framework for the proposed network and outlines the approach towards ensuring that the buildings management and related support services are provided in a safe, reliable, high-quality, cost-effective and timely manner, resulting in a more productive working environment with greater client satisfaction.

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I. Introduction

1. Since 1945, the activities of the United Nations have increased in scope, complexity and geographic diversity, leading to an essential and parallel growth in the physical facilities occupied by the Organization. As a result, the real estate currently administered by the United Nations is quite extensive in physical and economic terms.

2. The survey of the properties conducted in 1999 (A/54/628) reveals that the United Nations sites currently total 175.65 hectares (ha) (434 acres) of land, of which 134.77 ha are owned by the Organization and 40.87 ha are leased at nominal or no cost. Total gross building floor area at these sites is 1,078,098 square metres. An additional 154,523 m^2 of building space is rented at commercial rates, bringing the total gross floor area in use at the locations surveyed to 1,252,621 m^2.

3. The estimated total current value of all land and buildings (owned and leased at nominal or no cost) is approximately $5,186,950,291. The current value of land and buildings owned by the United Nations is estimated at $1,289,101,248 (land) and $1,796,300,547 (buildings), making a total of $3,085,401,795.

4. These properties represent important investments that have been made either collectively by Member States through their contributions to the regular budget, or individually by Governments or others through voluntary gifts or by the lease of land and buildings to the Organization at nominal or no cost. The values of these properties are more than monetary, as they serve important functional purposes and have significant cultural and symbolic value.

5. Therefore, it is the responsibility of the Organization not only to maintain and enhance these valuable investments of Member States, but also to ensure a safe and efficient environment for staff, delegates and visitors in a proactive and cost-effective manner by progressive management, budgetary and contractual policies.

6. In this context, the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions recommended, in its reports to the General Assembly on the proposed programme budgets for 1996-1997,[1] 1998-1999[2] and 2000-2001,[3] that Headquarters should maintain a coordinating role for an overview of all United Nations facilities with regard to their physical condition, property valuations, facilities-related contracts, efficiency measures, maintenance and alterations/improvements projects and environmental concerns.

II. Proposed approach

7. In 1984 the General Assembly approved the recommendation of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions that responsibility for control and overall administration for overseas construction should rest with Headquarters. A Coordinator for Overseas Construction was appointed to direct and control all overseas projects, including retaining necessary architectural and engineering firms, overseeing contracting procedures and ensuring the coordination of the work of staff, consultants and contractors.

8. The Overseas Property Management and Construction Unit was established within the Office of General Services in 1988 as a separate organizational unit. In addition to responsibility for control and overall administration for overseas construction, the Unit was assigned responsibility for overseeing the planning, management and operation of all existing physical facilities of the Organization; developing databases for all major properties of the Organization and guidelines on space standards; reviewing long-range space requirements at all locations and formulating and implementing long-range maintenance programmes at all locations.

9. The Overseas Property Management and Construction Unit focused heavily on providing management, guidance and technical support for the construction of conference facilities at the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) and the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) and office facilities at Nairobi. The staffing requirements of this Unit were in direct relationship with the responsibilities for the level of funding during the construction period, which was completed in 1996. The Unit's responsibilities were redirected from overseeing major construction to providing overall advice and guidance related to all aspects of facilities management. It was therefore more feasible and practical to restructure the Unit as part of the Facilities Management Division by providing policy support and working closely with the overseas property managers towards specific items of concern.

10. In order to implement the responsibilities and provide effective operation of the Overseas Property Management and Construction Unit, in line with the recommendations of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions, the centralization of all overseas properties programme data at United Nations Headquarters would be required. Such an undertaking is a major responsibility, requiring full knowledge of each facility, its unique characteristics and modalities, maintenance history, operational needs, improvements and expansion programmes and associated budgets. Such a centralized level of coordination and management would entail significant additional staffing, travel costs and budgetary resources.

11. However, owing to modern technology in communications and high-speed information exchange, effective and timely coordination can be facilitated by networking through electronic mail, Internet and on-line sharing of data. Rather than trying to centralize all resources and records at Headquarters, it is more efficient and effective to coordinate all facilities-related matters through a digital-information-technology based exchange-network of one or more professionals designated as focal points at Headquarters and at each of the overseas duty stations. The purpose of such an Organization-wide collaborative team would be to exchange information regularly on best practices, common approaches and policy directives that would enhance the safety, reliability, efficiency and operations of the facilities while integrating evolving technologies into the buildings infrastructure.

12. Therefore, a decentralized technical, administrative and budgetary approach to a globally coordinated collaborative facilities management system based on information exchange is proposed. In this regard, the Office of Central Support Services, in collaboration with an Organization-wide team of designated professionals from each duty station, will provide a coordinating role for monitoring information exchange and policy dissemination with respect to locations outside Headquarters.

13. Previous programme budget preparations were based on the immediate maintenance requirements of each location, without an assessment of global needs within a coordinated programme designed to set priorities and limit the potential for "surges" in the need for budgetary appropriations. It is increasingly clear that, without an integrated programmatic structure, a continuation of mere listing of the requirements for each location in the budget leaves open the likelihood that such "scattered appropriations" will be used less effectively. As a result, some properties may not receive timely maintenance, repair and technical modernization or a short-term focus on "quick fixes" may not address the medium- and long-term organizational and programmatic goals.

14. An integrated, collaborative and coordinated approach through a regular "information exchange" regarding building conditions, environmental and safety issues, contracts, services, and renovation programmes by a network of professionals designated at each property location, such as that proposed herein, could become the medium for promoting effective and timely communication. This would facilitate an effective and efficient planning, management, alterations/improvements, maintenance and operation of all physical facilities of the Organization at Headquarters and overseas.

15. It is expected that such an approach could become the vehicle for a coordinated global facilities management programme with proper performance-based resource allocations and coordinated long-range planning consistent with operational needs and organizational objectives.

III. Pilot programme of information exchange

16. In 1999, a pilot programme for an "Overseas Properties Management Information Exchange Network" was proposed and initiated as a possible vehicle for improving support services. Each duty station was requested to designate a professional from its buildings management service or office of general services who was involved in their emergency preparedness programme for the year 2000 transition. Through this information exchange programme, the individuals involved were able to share the "contingency plans" for each of the sites, suggest improvements and communicate on-line on added observations prior to, during and after the year-2000 change. The process was successful in terms of proving the value of a global information exchange network.

17. Subsequently, the same successful networking process was used to gather data regarding overseas properties valuations and maintenance budgets, to

exchange data regarding the management of asbestos containing materials at various locations, and review options for computerized automation and maintenance management systems.

IV. Inaugural seminar for the Overseas Properties Management Information Exchange Network

18. To further develop the opportunities for the creation and operation of a global information exchange network, a pilot seminar was held at United Nations Headquarters from 31 January to 8 February 2000. Representatives of United Nations offices at Geneva, Vienna and Nairobi, the International Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia, United Nations premises in Bonn, the United Nations Truce Supervision Organization (UNTSO), and the regional commissions were invited and participated. Key senior representatives from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS), the Common Services Project Coordinator, the United Nations Development Group (UNDG) and the World Bank were requested to attend and participate in the discussions. The Information Technology Services Division, the Procurement Division, and the Security and Safety Service gave individual presentations on their mandates and functional roles. A joint presentation by the United Nations Common Services Project Coordinator for New York together with the Sub-Group on Common Premises and Services of the United Nations Development Group (UNDG) presented strategies and experiences acquired from the Common Services approach that are in line with the Secretary-General's reform initiatives.

19. The participants agreed that global networking and information exchange is valuable to their efforts to provide quality services. A major recommendation of this workshop was the proposal to establish OPMIEN in order to continue the process of exchanging ideas, problems, policy issues, services and other operational issues related to facilities management. Group recommendations ranged from proposals on technical discussions through on-line exchanges to proposed annual meetings to be hosted by various duty stations.

V. Common items of concern

20. On the basis of the discussions and the feedback from the inaugural seminar, participants agreed to focus on the following key activities:

(a) Standard measurements and action plans for environmental, health and safety issues;

(b) Guidelines and standards for space management, furniture and interior renovations;

(c) Development and maintenance of common databases for substantive facilities, budgets and contractual items;

(d) Guidelines and standards for infrastructure and building technology issues in the Information Technology Services Division;

(e) Sharing of service contracts and their administration;

(f) Design of individual web sites that could be linked to share procedural, service and policy matters;

(g) Development and implementation of a comprehensive programme and policies for the Overseas Properties Management Information Exchange Network and an annual information exchange seminar at one of the duty stations;

(h) Standards and guidelines for energy and water efficiency and management measures;

(i) Promotion of the "common services" concept for efficiency and improved services;

(j) Design and measurement of performance indicators that could be linked to budgetary programmes;

(k) Guidelines and policies with regard to outsourcing and in-house staffing;

(l) Guidelines and policies for medium- and long-range capital improvement planning.

VI. Terms of reference

21. The participants reviewed and agreed on the terms of reference for OPMIEN consistent with the approach suggested in chapter II above.

VII. The functions of OPMIEN

22. The functions of OPMIEN are the following:

(a) To facilitate such an effort of common concerns related to facilities management, the Office of Central Support Services at United Nations Headquarters will develop, in close collaboration with the administrations at other duty stations, an integrated and systematic Organization-wide policy, administrative, procurement and budget information exchange programme, with the following objectives:

(i) To develop a common framework for the properties' critical parameters, conditions and values;

(ii) To assess relative operational and maintenance costs;

(iii) To develop strategies for the short-, medium- and long-range planning of facilities alterations, improvements and major maintenance items;

(iv) To develop design and construction standards, policies and procedures;

(v) To address energy and environmental, health and safety issues.

(b) Detailed, comprehensive databases will be prepared to facilitate programme development and implementation of standards and guidelines for long-range maintenance and operations. For the efficient management of facilities to suit organizational objectives, the integrated major maintenance programme should be projected over a long-range planning period of 10 to 15 years. However, medium-term plans and biennial programme budget proposals will continue to be presented in the mandated four-year and two-year cycles, but with greater emphasis on the coordination and integration of programme elements and on budgetary consistency over time;

(c) The following types of typical data would be collected:

(i) Inventory of the properties and buildings owned or occupied by the United Nations;

(ii) Physical condition of the properties and buildings;

(iii) Increase/decrease in the number of buildings or spaces since original occupancy;

(iv) Current replacement value of the properties and buildings;

(v) Maintenance and repair budgets requested for each biennium in comparison with industry standards at each duty station, vis-à-vis the value of the buildings;

(vi) List of services outsourced, nature and form of such outsourced services and specific experiences with in-house and outsourced services;

(vii) Efficiency measures with regard to space planning, alterations and improvements, contracting and energy/water saving;

(viii) Occupational safety and health-related staff concerns and how these issues are being addressed;

(ix) Review information exchange group work proposals and recommendations;

(x) Recommend policy initiatives and action plans to improve operations and services;

(xi) Secure support and mobilize resources as necessary, to implement recommendations at each duty station.

VIII. Membership

23. The core members of the network are the following:

(a) Director/Chief, Facilities Management Division, Headquarters;

(b) One or more senior officers from Headquarters;

(c) One or more senior officers from each duty station;

(d) One or more senior officers from other United Nations agencies and programmes, such as UNICEF, UNDP, UNOPS and UNFPA.

IX. Budgetary, manpower and other resources

24. All resources required to support OPMIEN at United Nations Headquarters and at each of the duty stations and funds and programmes will be included in

their respective regular budgets and no separate centralized funding is envisioned. This matter may be reviewed for any special large construction projects that may fall under the review and management of OPMIEN.

X. Conclusions: programme strategy for a globally coordinated collaborative approach to administrative and financial efficiency for United Nations properties and building services

25. The buildings, land and support facilities owned or leased by the United Nations are a major asset of the Organization. They are not only very prestigious and of landmark quality, but they also symbolize the Organization by its architectural character and global image.

26. Their physical condition has an important impact on the efficiency of the Secretariat and the conference, administrative, humanitarian, socio-economic developments and peacekeeping operations.

27. Under the Secretary-General's reform programme of expanding and strengthening common services and by following good industry practices, there is a need for a coordinated and collaborative approach to planning and budgeting of alterations, improvements, operations and maintenance of all United Nations properties worldwide by sharing and learning from knowledge, experiences and contractual arrangements.

28. To facilitate such an effort, a decentralized approach is proposed. In this regard, the Office of Central Support Services will provide a coordinating role for monitoring, information exchange and policy dissemination with respect to locations outside Headquarters in collaboration with an Organization-wide team of professionals designated as focal points from each duty station. The collaborative team would develop and maintain a database of all land, buildings and property values, office and conference spaces, relative operational and maintenance costs and other parameters to facilitate programme development and implementation of standards and guidelines for consistent operations, environmental controls, facilities planning and budgeting. OPMIEN would regularly exchange information by networking via the Internet and e-mail and would meet once a year at one of the duty stations to focus on items of immediate interest. The funding and other resources required would be included in the regular budgets of the offices at each of the duty stations. For efficient planning, budgeting and management of facilities to suit organizational objectives, an effort will be made to project, over a long-range planning period of 10 to 15 years, the integrated alterations, improvements, major maintenance and construction programmes. Medium-term plans and biennial programme budget proposals will continue to be presented in the mandated four-year and two-year cycles, but with a greater emphasis on the coordination and integration of programme elements and on budgetary consistency over longer periods.

29. The Secretary-General would report to the General Assembly periodically on the specific activities and accomplishments of OPMIEN as appropriate.

Notes

[1] *Official Records of the General Assembly, Fiftieth Session, Supplement No. 7* (A/50/7), chap. II, part XI, sect. 31, para. XI.21.

[2] Ibid., *Fifty-second Session, Supplement No. 7* (A/52/7/Rev.1), chap. II, part XI, sect. 31, para. XI.6.

[3] Ibid., *Fifty-fourth Session, Supplement No. 7* (A/54/7), chap. I, para. 92; chap. II, part VIII, para. VIII.39; part XI, para. XI.6.

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Environment and sustainable development

Convention on Biological Diversity

Note by the Secretary-General**

The Secretary-General has the honour to submit to the General Assembly, pursuant to its request in resolutions 54/221 and 54/218 of 22 December 1999, the report of the Executive Secretary of the Convention on Biological Diversity.

* A/55/150.

** The document could not be submitted before 5 July 2000 because the Department of Economic and Social Affairs received the report from the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity on 26 July 2000. The Secretariat of the Convention was not able to submit the report earlier because of the workload associated with preparation for and organization of the fifth meeting of the Conference of the Parties, which was held from 15 to 26 May 2000. Furthermore, the Secretariat of the Convention deemed it beneficial to reflect the outcome of the meeting of the Conference of the Parties in its report to the General Assembly.

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Report of the Executive Secretary of the Convention on Biological Diversity

I. Introduction

1. In paragraph 19 of its resolution 54/221 of 22 December 1999 the General Assembly invited the Executive Secretary of the Convention on Biological Diversity to report to it on the ongoing work regarding the Convention. In paragraph 11 (e) of its resolution 54/218 of 22 December 1999, the Assembly also invited the Executive Secretary to provide a report on how the activities of the Convention contribute to the implementation of Agenda 21[1] and the Programme for the Further Implementation of Agenda 21[2] for the consideration of the General Assembly at its fifty-fifth session. The present report addresses both requests.

2. Since the previous report of the Executive Secretary to the General Assembly (A/54/428), the principal activities have been the adoption on 29 January 2000 of the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety to the Convention on Biological Diversity and the fifth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention in May 2000. Details regarding the two activities are described in sections II and III below. Section IV provides further details about cooperation between the Convention and the United Nations. Section V reports on how the activities of the Convention contribute to the implementation of Agenda 21 and the Programme for the Further Implementation of Agenda 21.

3. At 19 July 2000, there were 177 parties to the Convention and a total of 68 parties had signed the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety to the Convention.

II. Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety to the Convention on Biological Diversity

4. The Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety to the Convention on Biological Diversity was adopted by the Conference of the Parties to the Convention at Montreal, Canada, on 29 January 2000 (decision EM-1/3). In accordance with the precautionary approach contained in principle 15 of the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development,[3] the objective of the Protocol is to contribute to ensuring an adequate level of protection in the field of the safe transfer, handling and use of living modified organisms resulting from modern biotechnology that may have adverse effects on the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity, taking also into account risks to human health, and focusing specifically on transboundary movements.

5. The provisions of the Protocol establish an information-sharing mechanism that is intended to provide countries with the necessary means to take informed decisions about the risks and benefits associated with transboundary movements of living modified organisms covered by the Protocol. The central mechanism for this is the advance informed agreement procedures outlined in articles 7 to 10. The Protocol also contains provisions addressing the capacity-building needs of developing country parties and parties with economies in transition. The text of the Protocol is available from the secretariat or can be obtained from its web site at www.biodiv.org.

6. In accordance with its article 36, the Protocol was opened for signature at the United Nations Office at Nairobi on 15 May 2000. A total of 67 States and one regional economic integration organization have signed the Protocol. A list of these signatories is provided in annex I to the present report. The Protocol will remain open for signature until 4 June 2001 at United Nations Headquarters in New York. It will enter into force 90 days after the deposit of the fiftieth instrument of ratification, acceptance, approval or accession by States or regional economic integration organizations that are parties to the Convention.

7. By decision EM-1/3 the Conference of the Parties also established the Intergovernmental Committee for the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety to undertake the preparations necessary for the first meeting of the parties to the Protocol. In decision V/1 the Conference of the Parties welcomed the generous offer made by the Government of France to host the first meeting of the Committee from 11 to 15 December 2000 at Montpellier and approved a workplan for the Committee. An outline of the plan is contained in annex II. The work plan addresses all issues that the parties to the Protocol need to consider at the first meeting. Capacity-building, information sharing and the establishment of the Biosafety Clearing House are

some of the priorities to be considered by the Committee.

8. It is envisaged that one or two more meetings of the Committee will take place before the first meeting of the parties to the Protocol. Plans are being made for the first meeting of the Parties to take place during the next meeting of the Conference of the Parties in April 2002 at The Hague, the Netherlands.

III. The fifth meeting of the Conference of the Parties

9. The fifth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity took place at UNEP headquarters in Nairobi from 15 to 26 May 2000. It was attended by over 1500 participants representing 156 Governments, as well as non-governmental organizations, intergovernmental organizations and indigenous and local community organizations.

10. The Conference of the Parties reviewed the implementation of existing decisions and adopted 29 further decisions. Decisions that contain important developments in terms of implementing the Convention are:

Decision	*Title*	*Products*
V/1	Work plan of the Intergovernmental Committee for the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety	Programme of work
V/2	Progress report on the implementation of the programme of work on the biological diversity of inland water ecosystems	Endorsed joint programme of work with the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands of International Importance especially as Waterfowl Habitat. The Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice to consider report of the World Commission on Dams
V/3	Progress report on the implementation of the programme of work on marine and coastal biological diversity	Advice on and identification of priority areas for action on coral bleaching
V/4	Progress report on the implementation of the programme of work on forest biological diversity	Terms of reference for a technical expert group
V/5	Agricultural biological diversity: review of phase I of the programme of work and adoption of a multi-year work programme	Programme of work and decision on genetic use restriction technologies
V/6	Ecosystem approach	Description of approach and 12 principles
V/8	Alien species that threaten ecosystems, habitats or species	Interim guiding principles
V/9	Global taxonomy initiative: implementation and further advance of the suggestions for action	Establishment of a network (based on national focal points and coordination mechanism) and identification of short-term activities
V/11	Additional financial resources	Workshop on financing for biodiversity

Decision	*Title*	*Products*
V/12	Second review of the financial mechanism	Terms of reference and procedure for review
V/14	Scientific and technical cooperation and the clearing-house mechanism	Strategic plan and longer term programme of work
V/16	Article 8 (j) and related provisions	Programme of work and general principles
V/17	Education and public awareness	Convening consultative working group of experts to identify priority activities
V/18	Impact assessment, liability and redress	The Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice to further develop guidelines and to convene workshop on liability and redress
V/19	National reporting	Guidelines for second national reports
V/20	Operations of the Convention	Strategic plan and scientific assessments
V/23	Consideration of options for conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity in dryland, Mediterranean, arid, semi-arid, grassland and savannah ecosystems	Programme of work
V/24	Sustainable use as a cross-cutting issue	Workshop on sustainable use
V/25	Biological diversity and tourism	Assessment of impacts of tourism
V/26	Access to genetic resources	Establishment of a working group and guidance for the World Trade Organization (WTO) on sui generis systems

11. The full text of the decisions is available from the secretariat or can be obtained from its web site at *www.biodiv.org*.

12. The meeting clearly demonstrated the growing maturity of the process. Of significant internal importance in this regard was the decision taken on the operations of the Convention (decision V/20). Two of the most significant developments in this regard were the Conference of the Parties decision to develop a strategic plan for the Convention and the decision to undertake a limited number of pilot scientific assessments in preparation for the sixth meeting of the Conference of the Parties. Both developments will significantly focus the efforts of the process as a whole and enhance its ability to deliver products and achieve the aims of the Convention.

13. Significant progress was made in advancing the work of the Convention apropos its commitments on access and benefit sharing, indigenous and local communities and article 8 (j) and trade issues. With respect to access and benefit sharing the Conference of the parties identified some simple and essential steps that Parties should implement as soon as possible. The Conference of the Parties also established an ad hoc working group to develop guidelines and requested that the Panel of Experts on Access and Benefit-Sharing advise the Working Group on outstanding issues regarding intellectual property rights. With respect to intellectual property rights the Conference of the Parties also identified a series of specific questions that it requested submissions from parties and the Panel to consider. The Conference of the Parties also emphasized the importance of sui generis systems for achieving the aims of the Convention and invited WTO to acknowledge this. For article 8 (j), the Conference of the Parties endorsed a programme work for the Working Group on article 8 (j) and its related

provisions. It also recommended that parties consider taking a number of practical measures to assist with the implementation of those obligations, such as the establishment of national registers of traditional knowledge. Finally, the Conference of the Parties acknowledged the increasing links between the work of the Convention and the international trade regime. In this regard it anticipated growing links with respect to alien species, agriculture, intellectual property rights, article 8 (j) and its related provisions and biosafety. To that end it reiterated its request for observer status for the Executive Secretary in the WTO Council for the Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights and the Committee on Agriculture.

14. Pursuant to decision V/29, the sixth meeting of the Conference of the Parties is expected to take place in The Hague, the Netherlands, in April 2002. The Conference of the Parties has now taken over 100 decisions and launched programmes of work to address 5 ecosystem-based themes and 13 cross-cutting issues. As a result, policy has been and/or is being developed to address most of the issues raised by the Convention. The key challenge for the sixth meeting of the Conference of the Parties will be to demonstrate that not only can the Convention develop policy but that it is also an effective vehicle for its implementation. The priority issues for the sixth meeting — forests, alien species and benefit sharing — will provide crucial areas for demonstrating this effectiveness.

15. Central to achieving these goals and implementing the decisions of the Conference of the Parties will be the work of the parties in preparation for the sixth meeting. An important aspect of these preparations will be meetings of the various subsidiary bodies of the Convention. Annex III to the present report contains a tentative list of proposed dates and locations for these meetings.

IV. Cooperation with the General Assembly and other relevant institutions

16. In keeping with past practice, the Conference of the Parties placed considerable emphasis in its decision on cooperation with a wide range of bodies and institutions. Once again the relationship between the Convention and the General Assembly and its related bodies was of central importance. Important aspects of this relationship include: cooperation with the Rio conventions; forest biological diversity; sustainable tourism; financial support for the implementation of the Convention; education and public awareness; and exploring synergies with respect to scientific assessments of the ecological linkages between the Rio conventions. The focus of the relationship between the Convention and the General Assembly will, however, be the forthcoming 10-year review of progress achieved in the implementation of the outcome of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development and the contribution that the Convention can make to this process. This last aspect is addressed in section V.

17. Cooperation with the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, particularly in Africa has been further developed. In decision V/23, the Conference of the Parties established a programme of work for dry and sub-humid lands that had been jointly developed by the secretariat and its secretariat of the Convention to Combat Desertification. In this decision, the Conference of the Parties also requested the development of a joint work programme and the establishment of a roster of experts on biological diversity of dry and sub-humid land in close collaboration with the Executive Secretary of the Convention to Combat Desertification.

18. The Conference of the Parties also noted that closer collaboration with the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, including its Kyoto Protocol was desirable with respect to a number of issues. To this end the Conference of the Parties requested its President, the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice, parties and the Executive Secretary to cooperate with relevant bodies of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, including its Kyoto Protocol, with particular emphasis on the issues of dry and sub-humid lands, forest biological diversity, coral reefs and incentive measures.

19. With respect to forests, the Conference of the parties urged Parties, Governments and organizations to advance the implementation of the programme of work for forest biological diversity, previously described in document A/53/451. The Conference of the Parties, in decision V/4, established a technical expert group to, inter alia, identify options and suggest

priority actions to: mitigate the direct and underlying causes of forest biodiversity loss, restore degraded forests and identify state of the art technologies with a view to assisting the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice consider these issues. The Subsidiary Body was also requested to develop advice on human induced uncontrolled forest fires and to propose sustainable practices for the harvesting of non-timber forest resources. The Conference of the Parties also suggested that the Subsidiary Body undertake a pilot assessment of forest biodiversity for consideration by the Conference of the Parties at its sixth meeting. Parties were urged to consider without delay the proposals for action of the Intergovernmental Forum on Forests and the Intergovernmental Panel on Forests on programme element II.d (v) on valuation of forest goods and services. Parties and governments were also called upon to take practical actions to address urgently the conservation and sustainable use of forest biological diversity taking into account the outcome of the Intergovernmental Forum on Forests and to contribute to the work of the United Nations Forum on Forests.

20. In decision V/25, the Conference of the Parties endorsed the assessment of interlinkages between biological diversity and tourism undertaken by the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice and transmitted this assessment to the Commission on Sustainable Development, along with the recommendation that the Commission incorporate the assessment in the international work programme on sustainable tourism development. The Conference of the Parties also accepted the invitation to participate in the international work programme on sustainable tourism development under the Commission process with regard to biological diversity, in particular, with a view to contributing to international guidelines for activities related to sustainable tourism development in vulnerable terrestrial, marine and coastal ecosystems and habitats of major importance for biological diversity and protected areas, including fragile riparian and mountain ecosystems, bearing in mind the need for such guidelines to apply to activities both within and outside protected areas, and taking into account existing guidelines. To that end, the Conference of the Parties requested the Executive Secretary to prepare a proposal for the contribution on guidelines, for example by convening an international workshop. As indicated in annex III to the present report, discussions have begun with the Government of Germany with respect to funding and hosting such a workshop. Finally, the Conference of the Parties decided to contribute further to the international work programme on sustainable tourism development under the Commission process with regard to biological diversity, and, in particular, to the review of its implementation, which will be carried out in 2002, and to that end requested the Subsidiary Body to transmit its findings, through the Executive Secretary, to the Commission at its tenth session.

21. In decision V/11, the Conference of the Parties emphasized the vital importance of adequate financial resources for the implementation of the Convention and reaffirmed the importance of providing new and additional financial resources through the financial mechanism in accordance with article 20 of the Convention. In order to address these issues, the Conference of the Parties invited the Global Environment Facility to assist the Executive Secretary, in collaboration with the relevant international organizations and institutions, to convene a workshop on financing for biodiversity with a view to sharing knowledge and experience among funding institutions, and to explore the potential of the Global Environment Facility to act as a funding catalyst. The Conference of the Parties also requested the Executive Secretary to explore further collaboration with the work on financial issues on Agenda 21 under the Commission on Sustainable Development, and to contribute to the High-Level International Intergovernmental Event on Financing for Development of the General Assembly in 2001. It is hoped that the workshop can provide a useful input to the Event.

22. Public education and awareness is a crucial aspect of the work of the Convention. In decision V/17, the Conference of the Parties requested the Executive Secretary to further develop activities designed to promote awareness. The Conference of the Parties also requested the Executive Secretary, in cooperation with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), to convene a consultative working group of experts to identify priorities for the proposed global initiative on biological diversity education and public awareness. An important tool for promoting awareness is the International Day for Biological Diversity, which has been celebrated on 29 December each year since 1994. Occurring so close to the end of the calendar year has meant that it has been difficult to fully capitalize on the occasion and the

interest of the United Nations to further promote awareness about biodiversity. Accordingly, the Conference of the Parties, in decision V/17, requested the Executive Secretary to consult the United Nations Secretariat on the feasibility of changing the designated date from 29 December to 22 May, when the text of the Convention was agreed and adopted.

23. An area of special importance to the work of the Convention with respect to cooperation has been the effort to further explore the opportunities to strengthen complementarities and improve scientific assessments of ecological linkages between the Rio conventions. An important initiative in this respect, which the Convention has fully supported and actively participated in its design, is the proposed millennium ecosystem assessment. For example, in decision V/21, the Conference of the Parties accepted the invitation of the millennium ecosystem assessment to be represented in the Executive Committee, nominated for this purpose the Chair of the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice and the Executive Secretary. More importantly, in decision V/20, the Conference of the Parties requested the Subsidiary Body to undertake a limited number of pilot scientific assessment projects in preparation for the sixth meeting of the Conference of the Parties, and invited, among others, the millennium ecosystem assessment to work closely together with the Subsidiary Body in this area.

24. The secretariat has also placed great importance on its efforts to cooperate with relevant international processes over the last year. The global biodiversity calendar of events, which contains details of relevant meetings organized by other processes, has been maintained. The important purpose of the calendar is not only to promote coordination and cooperation between the Convention and other processes but also to facilitate the contribution of other processes to the work of the Convention. The secretariat has also continued its collaboration with the Inter-Agency Committee on Sustainable Development in order to assist with preparations for meetings of the Commission on Sustainable Development and other related matters covered by this Committee. The secretariat also worked with: the Intergovernmental Forum on Forests and its Inter-Agency Task Force on Forests and is hoping that the Task Force will be able to assist in the preparations for the sixth meeting of the Conference of the Parties on forests. The secretariat has maintained regular contact with UNESCO on a range of initiatives and is expecting to launch a global public education and awareness initiative in the next few months. Preparations for the first meeting of the parties to the Protocol have also required developing close links with numerous organizations addressing related issues. To that end the secretariat has participated in the Inter-Agency Network for Safety in Biotechnology to enhance the exchange of information and facilitate co-operation between members. Other participating organizations include the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the International Centre for Genetic Engineering and Biotechnology, the International Office of Epizootics, the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, the United Nations Conference on Trade and the Environment, the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Industrial Development Organization, the World Health Organization, and the World Trade Organization.

V. Report on how the activities of the Convention contribute to the implementation of Agenda 21 and the Programme for the Further Implementation of Agenda 21

25. It will be recalled that the Executive Secretary and the Conference of the Parties made submissions to the General Assembly at its nineteenth special session regarding the contribution of the Convention to the implementation of Agenda 21 (A/S-19/13; see also E/CN.17/1997/11).

26. Many of the points made in those submissions are as relevant today as when they were made and remain germane to the 10-year review by the General Assembly. For example, the Conference of the Parties observed that the Convention was an important tool for translating the principles of the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development and Agenda 21 into concrete actions. The Conference of the Parties also noted that the Convention had adopted an ecosystem approach, both in its provisions and in its programme of work. The working definition was that it was a strategy for integrated management of land, water and living resources that promoted conservation and sustainable use in an equitable way. It was based on the application of appropriate scientific methodologies

focused on levels of biological organization that encompass the essential process, functions and interaction among organisms and their environment. It recognized that humans, with their cultural diversity, were an integral component of systems. The relevance of that idea to the implementation of Agenda 21 remains today and the definition represents an important contribution to the review process.

27. The Conference of the Parties also observed that the integration of biological diversity considerations into relevant sectoral or cross-sectoral plans, programmes and policies was central to the Convention. The importance of this observation remains central today despite the fact that it has proved very difficult to achieve. The Conference of the Parties also attached particular importance to cooperation with other biological diversity-related conventions, institutions and processes. As is evident from the decisions of the fifth meeting of the Conference of the Parties this remains vitally important to the effective operation of the Convention.

28. The Conference of the Parties recognized that biological diversity was a cross-cutting issue and that it was of the utmost relevance to a number of the issues reviewed by the Commission on Sustainable Development, including the planning and management of land resources; combating deforestation; managing fragile ecosystems; promoting sustainable agriculture and rural development; and consideration of marine and coastal biological diversity. This is still so today.

29. With respect to the Convention and chapter 15 of Agenda 21, the Conference of the Parties observed that the Convention was the principal global instrument relevant to achieving the goals set out in chapter 15 of Agenda 21, conservation of biological diversity. That remains the case today.

30. The Conference of the Parties also observed that the Convention had significant relevance to other chapters of Agenda 21, highlighting in particular the contribution of the Convention to:

(a) National planning processes;

(b) Marine and coastal biological diversity;

(c) Terrestrial biological diversity;

(d) Environmentally sound management of biotechnology;

(e) Technical and scientific cooperation, and capacity-building;

(f) Financial resources;

(g) Financial mechanism;

(h) Major groups.

The same holds true now.

31. Importantly, the Conference of the Parties concluded that despite the progress made in implementing the objectives of the Convention, the parties remained aware that biological diversity was being destroyed by human activities at unprecedented rates. The Conference of the Parties noted that a significant amount of work remained to be undertaken, in collaboration with relevant conventions, institutions and processes, in order to fully implement the Convention. In particular, the Conference of the Parties recognized that attention needed to be paid, inter alia, to:

(a) The further raising of public awareness and the understanding of the importance of biological diversity through educational programmes and information;

(b) The rapid development and implementation of national strategies, plans or programmes for the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity;

(c) The consideration of appropriate arrangements for access to genetic resources, and for the fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising out of the utilization of such resources;

(d) The development of effective means to respect, preserve and maintain the knowledge, innovations and practices of indigenous and local communities and the equitable sharing of the benefits arising out of the utilization thereof;

(e) The transfer of and access to technologies relevant to the Convention;

(f) The provision of new and additional financial resources for the implementation of the Convention.

32. These challenges were acknowledged by the General Assembly in its Programme for the Further Implementation of Agenda 21.

33. Significant progress has been achieved with respect to many of these issues. In the view of the Executive Secretary the most important achievements of the Convention in this respect are:

(a) First and foremost is the adoption of the Protocol on Biosafety. This instrument represents a significant achievement of the international community in many respects. Its procedures, for example, represent one of the most advanced and detailed elaborations of the precautionary principle in international law. The Protocol will also establish a series of mechanisms that will make a real contribution to technology transfer. In short, the Protocol provides an opportunity for many developing countries to gain access to information and technology for one of the most important industries for the coming century. As such it makes a valuable contribution to the implementation of chapter 16 of Agenda 21;

(b) The Convention has contributed significantly to the extent that the public is aware of biological diversity and the goods and services it provides, as well as threats that human activities pose to its long-term viability. A manifestation of this is the increasing diversity of participants in meetings of the Convention;

(c) More than 100 countries have implemented the obligation to develop a national biodiversity strategy and action plan. The significance of this step cannot be overestimated, especially given that it is the first time that such a comprehensive and wide-ranging planning initiative has been undertaken with respect to management of natural resources. An important consequence of this significant achievement is that there is now the basis in terms of information and policy to properly consider underlying trends and to identify priorities with respect to biodiversity, at all levels of governance;

(d) The Convention has also successfully implemented the concept of inter-agency cooperation. This is not only manifested in the various memoranda of understanding or the wide range of organizations that participate in the development of policy within the Convention process, but most importantly in the adoption of joint programmes of work with the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands of International Importance especially as Waterfowl Habitat, the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, particularly in Africa, and various regional seas programmes, as well as the Global Plan of Action for Land-Based Sources of Marine Pollution;

(e) Finally, the Convention has played a significant role in demonstrating that the Global Environment Facility can work and make a valuable contribution to addressing environmental issues of global significance and importance.

34. Moreover, further progress is expected by the sixth meeting of the Conference of the Parties in April 2002. The development of a strategic plan, scientific assessments on forest and alien species and the entry into force of the Protocol are anticipated products by 2002. Further progress is expected with respect to the priority issues on the agenda of the Conference of the Parties at its sixth meeting — forest, alien species and benefit sharing — and the seventh meeting — protected areas, mountain ecosystems and transfer of technology and technological cooperation.

35. Despite these significant achievements, biological diversity is still being destroyed by human activities at unprecedented rates and, consequently, much remains to be done. For example, as stated previously, a key challenge facing the Convention over the next two years will be demonstrating that not only can the Convention develop policy but that it is also an effective vehicle for implementing it.

36. As a consequence of the realization that much remains to be done to properly implement the Convention, the Conference of the Parties recognized the importance of the forthcoming 10-year review of progress achieved in the implementation of the outcome of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development and adopted decision V/27 addressing the contribution of the Convention to that review process. In that decision, the Conference of the Parties welcomed the invitation of the General Assembly in its resolution 54/218 to the secretariat of the Convention to report on how its activities are contributing to the implementation of Agenda 21 and the Programme for the Further Implementation of Agenda 21, for the consideration of the Assembly at its fifty-fifth session. It also welcomed the invitation of the Commission on Sustainable Development extended to secretariats of conventions related to the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development to support preparatory activities of the 10-year review, and to review and assess their respective programmes

of work since the Conference. It requested the Executive Secretary to support such preparatory activities and, in particular, to report to the Commission on Sustainable Development on progress made in the implementation of the Convention and encouraged parties, Governments and countries to highlight and emphasize biological diversity considerations in their contributions to the 10-year review. Consequently the secretariat has continued to participate in the Inter-Agency Committee on Sustainable Development and other mechanisms for assisting the Secretary-General in preparing for the review. Moreover, the issues will receive further attention at the sixth meeting of the Conference of the Parties in April 2002.

Notes

[1] *Report of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, Rio de Janeiro, 3-14 June 1992* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.93.I.8 and corrigenda), vol. I: *Resolutions adopted by the Conference*, resolution 1, annex II.

[2] Resolution S-19/2, annex.

[3] *Report of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, Rio de Janeiro, 3-14 June 1992* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.93.I.8 and corrigenda), vol. I: *Resolutions adopted by the Conference*, resolution 1, annex I.

Annex I

Signatories to the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety to the Convention on Biological Diversity

Participant	*Date of signature*
1. Algeria	25 May 2000
2. Antigua and Barbuda	24 May 2000
3. Argentina	24 May 2000
4. Austria	24 May 2000
5. Bahamas	24 May 2000
6. Bangladesh	24 May 2000
7. Belgium	24 May 2000
8. Benin	24 May 2000
9. Bolivia	24 May 2000
10. Bulgaria	24 May 2000
11. Burkina Faso	24 May 2000
12. Central African Republic	24 May 2000
13. Chad	24 May 2000
14. Chile	24 May 2000
15. Colombia	24 May 2000
16. Costa Rica	24 May 2000
17. Cuba	24 May 2000
18. Czech Republic	24 May 2000
19. Denmark	24 May 2000
20. Ecuador	24 May 2000
21. El Salvador	24 May 2000
22. Ethiopia	24 May 2000
23. European Community	24 May 2000
24. Finland	24 May 2000
25. France	24 May 2000
26. Gambia	24 May 2000
27. Germany	24 May 2000
28. Greece	24 May 2000
29. Grenada	24 May 2000
30. Guinea	24 May 2000
31. Haiti	24 May 2000
32. Honduras	24 May 2000
33. Hungary	24 May 2000
34. Indonesia	24 May 2000
35. Ireland	24 May 2000
36. Italy	24 May 2000

Participant	*Date of signature*
37. Kenya	15 May 2000
38. Lithuania	24 May 2000
39. Luxembourg	11 July 2000
40. Malawi	24 May 2000
41. Malaysia	24 May 2000
42. Mexico	24 May 2000
43. Monaco	24 May 2000
44. Morocco	25 May 2000
45. Mozambique	24 May 2000
46. Namibia	24 May 2000
47. Netherlands	24 May 2000
48. New Zealand	24 May 2000
49. Nicaragua	26 May 2000
50. Niger	24 May 2000
51. Norway	24 May 2000
52. Peru	24 May 2000
53. Philippines	24 May 2000
54. Poland	24 May 2000
55. Portugal	24 May 2000
56. Rwanda	24 May 2000
57. Samoa	24 May 2000
58. Slovakia	24 May 2000
59. Slovenia	24 May 2000
60. Spain	24 May 2000
61. Sri Lanka	24 May 2000
62. Sweden	24 May 2000
63. Switzerland	24 May 2000
64. Togo	24 May 2000
65. Turkey	24 May 2000
66. Uganda	24 May 2000
67. United Kingdom	24 May 2000
68. Venezuela	24 May 2000

Annex II

Work plan of the Intergovernmental Committee for the Cartagena Protocol

A. Issues for consideration by the Committee at its first meeting

1. Decision-making (art. 10, para. 7).
2. Information-sharing (art. 20, art. 19).
3. Capacity-building (art. 22, art. 28).
4. Handling, transport, packaging and identification (art. 18).
5. Compliance (art. 34).

B. Issues for consideration by the Committee at its second meeting

1. Liability and redress (art. 27).
2. Monitoring and reporting (art. 33).
3. Secretariat (art. 31).
4. Guidance to the financial mechanism (art. 28, para. 5, art. 22).
5. Rules of procedure for the meeting of the Parties.
6. Consideration of other issues necessary for the effective implementation of the Protocol (e.g., art. 29, para. 4).
7. Elaboration of a draft provisional agenda for the first meeting of the Parties.

The Committee will also take up items for continued consideration from the first meeting of the Committee.

Annex III

Tentative list of proposed dates and venues for selected meetings of the subsidiary bodies of the Convention on Biological Diversity

Tentative dates	*Meeting*	*Venue*
11-15 December 2000	First meeting of the Intergovernmental Committee for the Cartagena Protocol	France
12-16 March 2001	Sixth meeting of the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice	Montreal
26-30 March 2001	Panel of Experts on Access and Benefit-Sharing	Montreal
4-8 June 2001	Workshop on Sustainable Tourism	Germany
19-21 September 2001	Workshop on Liability and Redress	France
22-26 October 2001	Working Group on Access and Benefit-Sharing	Germany
26-30 November 2001	Seventh meeting of the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice	Montreal
3-7 December 2001	Second Intersessional Meeting on the Operations of the Convention	Montreal
28 January-1 February 2002	Second meeting of the Intergovernmental Committee for the Cartagena Protocol	Montreal
4-6 February 2002	Working Group on Article 8 (j)	Montreal
8-26 April 2002	Sixth meeting of the Conference of the Parties and first meeting of the Parties to the Montreal Protocol	Netherlands

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Fifty-fifth session
Item 20 (b) of the provisional agenda*
Strengthening of the coordination of humanitarian and disaster relief assistance of the United Nations, including special economic assistance: special economic assistance to individual countries or regions

International cooperation and coordination for the human and ecological rehabilitation and economic development of the Semipalatinsk region of Kazakhstan

Report of the Secretary-General**

I. Introduction

1. In its resolution 52/169 M of 16 December 1997, the General Assembly invited the international community to contribute to the human and ecological rehabilitation and economic development of the Semipalatinsk region of Kazakhstan. In addition, the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to prepare a report in order to assist the Government in the formulation of an overall action plan to address the humanitarian, ecological and economic needs of the region, which had formerly been used as a nuclear testing ground.

2. The United Nations country team in Kazakhstan, under the leadership of the United Nations Resident Coordinator and the Resident Representative of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), responded to the appeal in a timely manner. In order to assist the Government of Kazakhstan in the formulation of a recommended overall action plan to address the humanitarian, ecological and economic problems and needs of the region, a joint needs assessment mission was deployed from 15 to 30 June 1998. Participating in the mission were 20 international and 50 national experts. As a result of the mission, an integrated programme framework, consisting of 38 priority project proposals in the areas of health, humanitarian aid, ecology, economy and information dissemination, was prepared.

3. The report of the Secretary-General on international cooperation and coordination for the human and ecological rehabilitation and economic development of the Semipalatinsk region of Kazakhstan (A/53/424) led to the adoption by the General Assembly of its resolution 53/1 H of 16 November 1998. In that resolution the Assembly stressed the need for greater international attention and extra efforts in solving problems with regard to the region and its population; invited all States, relevant organizations and other entities of the international community, including non-governmental organizations, to share their knowledge and experience in order to contribute to the human and ecological rehabilitation and economic development of the region; and invited all Member States, in particular donor States and

* A/55/150.

** The footnote requested by the General Assembly in its resolution 54/248 was not included in the submission.

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relevant organs and organizations of the United Nations system, to participate in the rehabilitation of the region. In addition, the Assembly invited the Secretary-General to pursue a consultative process on modalities for mobilizing the necessary support to seek appropriate solutions to the problems and needs of the region.

4. Since the adoption of the General Assembly resolutions, the international community has devoted considerable attention to the situation in the Semipalatinsk region. The Government of Kazakhstan and the United Nations country team in Kazakhstan have jointly initiated a series of consultations with the country's main international partners.

II. Institutional framework for the Semipalatinsk Relief and Rehabilitation Programme

5. In order to better coordinate the provision of external assistance to the Semipalatinsk region, the Government of Kazakhstan established an interministerial commission on Semipalatinsk, chaired by the Vice-Minister of Foreign Affairs. The commission consists of representatives from key government agencies, including the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Ecology and Environmental Protection, the Ministry of Energy, the Ministry of Industry and Trade and the Ministry of Defence, and a number of important non-governmental organizations, namely Polygon 29 and Nevada-Semipalatinsk. The interministerial commission meets on a regular basis and coordinates implementation of the national programme, as well as external development and humanitarian assistance to the region.

6. In April 1999, five working groups were established for each programme area outlined in the report of the Secretary-General (A/53/424). The main responsibility of the groups was to formulate, with the assistance of international experts provided by the United Nations country team, project proposals in their respective areas. As a result, an integrated Semipalatinsk Relief and Rehabilitation Programme was developed. The programme consists of 38 impact-oriented actions for relief and rehabilitation in five areas of concern: (a) health; (b) environment and ecology; (c) economic recovery; (d) humanitarian issues; and (e) information and advocacy. The programme document was distributed among the donor community prior to the Tokyo International Conference on Semipalatinsk, which was to be held in September 1999.

7. With the support of UNDP, a programme coordination unit was established to coordinate the preparations for the Conference on behalf of the Government of Kazakhstan and UNDP. The unit would report directly to the interministerial commission and would also be responsible for the implementation of follow-up to the Conference.

III. Tokyo International Conference on Semipalatinsk

8. The Tokyo International Conference on Semipalatinsk was one of the principal initiatives taken to follow up the report of the Secretary-General (A/53/424). On the occasion of the consideration by the Assembly of the report of the Secretary-General, the Government of Japan offered to host, jointly with UNDP, an international conference to consider ways of taking the report and its recommendations forward. The Conference was held in Tokyo on 6 and 7 September 1999; it was attended by high-level representatives of the Government of Kazakhstan. Four other United Nations entities shared the sponsoring of the Conference: the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA).

9. The Conference had the following key objectives:

(a) To raise the awareness of the international community of the current situation in the Semipalatinsk region and the consequences of nuclear testing and to inform participants of the prioritized projects to meet the needs in the Semipalatinsk region;

(b) To appeal to the international community for further assistance to meet the urgent needs in the Semipalatinsk region;

(c) To consider possible cooperation and coordination of the international community and to exchange technical knowledge and experience in the areas of health, ecology, economic rehabilitation and humanitarian support;

(d) To inform participants of the institutional arrangements of Kazakhstan to manage, coordinate, use and account for international assistance and of the commitments and support from government, the private sector and civil society in Kazakhstan.

10. The international interest in the subject was reflected in the fact that more than 200 participants attended the Conference, representing 24 Governments, 12 multilateral organizations, including the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, UNFPA, UNICEF, the United Nations Environment Programme, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, the World Health Organization (WHO), the World Bank, IAEA, the European Union, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). Six non-governmental organizations and 38 Japanese organizations, institutions and agencies also participated. There was particularly strong interest demonstrated by the involvement of community and professional leaders from Nagasaki, Hiroshima and Semipalatinsk. The international media intensified its efforts to raise awareness about Semipalatinsk and the Conference.

11. At the opening meeting of the Conference, participants heard messages from the Prime Minister of Japan at that time, Keizo Obuchi, the President of Kazakhstan, Nursultan A. Nazarbayev, the Administrator of UNDP and the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator.

12. The Conference conveyed three important messages aimed at improving the effectiveness of the health and medical care provided to the population of the Semipalatinsk region:

(a) There was a need to improve the scientific evidence to be used as a basis for determining priorities and taking action;

(b) There was a need for transparency and accountability, including an improved communication strategy and involvement with the public, as well as better coordination of all national and international participants in the action;

(c) Handling the health-related consequences of people affected by nuclear testing should be seen as part of the broader public health strategy and reforms in Kazakhstan and should be balanced with other health needs in the region, including mother and child health, reproductive, environmental and mental health and communicable disease prevention.

13. While discussing the needs reflected in the integrated rehabilitation programme, consisting of 38 projects prepared by Kazakh and international experts, Conference participants emphasized the following:

(a) There was an urgent need to complete a comprehensive radiological assessment of the Semipalatinsk region and strengthen monitoring and a thorough radiological assessment of the Semipalatinsk nuclear testing site, which had come to be called to Polygon.[1] There were still a number of radioactive hot spots, including underground waters from the post-explosion cavities flowing out to the surface and the potential chemical spill of the transboundary Irtysh River. As the Irtysh flowed into the Arctic circle, the consequences could affect areas outside the region;

(b) It was extremely important to support the rehabilitation of the economy in order to improve prospects for self-help and sustained recovery among the population, in both urban and rural areas, giving special attention to those measures which supported the development of small businesses;

(c) The above-mentioned measures should be complemented by humanitarian assistance for the poorest and most vulnerable population group in the region;

(d) It was necessary to strengthen the capacities of government and other local institutions, including Kazakh non-governmental organizations, so that they could better administer programmes of action and ensure their impact on the most affected population groups;

(e) It was also important to make it possible for people to have access to information that would enable them to avoid risks, reduce psychosocial insecurity, receive guidance and enhance their knowledge of activities.

14. More than US$ 20 million was pledged by Japan, the World Bank, other United Nations entities and the General Board of Global Ministries. Switzerland, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies and Counterpart International, a non-governmental organization, also pledged their

assistance for the Semipalatinsk Relief and Rehabilitation Programme.

15. Members of the delegation of Kazakhstan explained how the humanitarian, rehabilitation and development assistance would be utilized, coordinated and managed in order to have the intended benefit in the affected areas.

IV. Donor assistance to the Semipalatinsk region

A. Health sector

16. Projects in the health sector represent the most important part of the Semipalatinsk Relief and Rehabilitation Programme. Japan is one of the largest donors, supporting health-care projects by providing medical equipment to local hospitals and developing local capacities. During the Conference, the Government of Japan promised to study the possibility of assisting in the establishment of screening and treatment systems in order to improve the medical infrastructure available to the affected population and the collection of basic data and the transfer of know-how concerning administrative measures.

17. UNFPA, together with WHO, plans to support a study on the influence of radiation on reproductive health, which will be carried out in 2000. The World Bank has committed its support to health-care projects through a loan of US$ 9 million to the Government of Kazakhstan, which will help the affected population by providing modern equipment to local health-care centres and training local doctors.

18. Internationaler Hilfsfonds, a non-governmental organization, has provided support to a diagnosis and rehabilitation centre for women and had conducted ultrasonic and genetic research concerning pregnant women and the treatment of the affected population with antioxidants.

19. A memorandum of understanding between the Ministry of Science and Higher Education of Kazakhstan and the General Board of Global Ministries was signed prior to the Conference. The initiatives of the General Board of Global Ministries, with a total budget of US$ 3 million, are aimed at improving health services in communities affected by nuclear testing and the subsequent closure of the nuclear weapons testing programme. That will be accomplished by supporting a community-based, family-oriented centre for primary health care that is replicable in other areas of the country, implementing effective training programmes, providing management technical assistance for health-care professionals and leveraging existing partnerships, both in the United States of America and in other countries, to mobilize additional resources.

B. Humanitarian sector

20. Internationaler Hilfsfonds and Counterpart International are the most active non-governmental organizations in the humanitarian sector. The International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies was active in 1999, particularly through its appeal for winter food, as a result of which 120 persons, among them the elderly, the physically and mentally disabled, and children from families without income received highly nutritional food for a two-month period.

21. The Governments of Switzerland and the United Kingdom have started their humanitarian assistance programme by providing basic medical supplies to health-care and social institutions in the region.

C. Economic sector

22. Programmes in the economic sector are being implemented mostly with the support of UNDP. Jointly with Mercy Corps International, UNDP is supporting women in the Semipalatinsk region through microcredit schemes. The Government of Japan, through its trust fund with UNDP, has pledged an additional contribution of US$ 1.2 million for three projects in support of the following: (a) the expansion of microcredit schemes for women; (b) business skill training; and (c) the provision of small grants for non-governmental organizations and community-based organizations.

23. The business skill training project will support dynamic and efficient small- and medium-sized enterprises that would increasingly contribute to economic growth, the creation of jobs and the generation of income in the Semipalatinsk region. The main objective of the project providing small grants for non-governmental organizations and community-based organizations is to reduce social suffering and the

humanitarian crisis in the region by improving the quality of social services delivered by local non-governmental and community-based organizations. A more healthy non-governmental presence in the region will concentrate skills and help in the mobilization of additional resources while multiplying the impact of already existing programmes.

D. Environmental sector

24. In the environmental sector, the Government of the United Kingdom has pledged to assist in the formulation of a land-use strategy for the areas around the former nuclear test site. Together with the National Nuclear Centre of Kazakhstan, NATO, within the framework of its Science for Peace subprogramme, is conducting a radiological assessment of water and ground fertility around the Sarzhal area of the Semipalatinsk region.

V. Conclusion

25. During the last two years, the international donor community has given considerable attention and delivered humanitarian and development assistance to the affected population of the Semipalatinsk region; however, because of the longer-term effects of radiation, as well as the consequences of nuclear explosions, the population remains exceptionally vulnerable and is not in a position to meet the economic, social and ecological challenges of the ongoing transition process.

26. It is important to address the compelling needs of the affected population, prioritized in the Semipalatinsk Relief and Rehabilitation Programme of the Government of Kazakhstan and emphasized by participants at the Tokyo International Conference on Semipalatinsk. The initiatives of the Government, complemented by the support of the international donor community, can only help to improve the situation of the affected population.

Notes

[1] The boundaries of the test site — the Polygon — encompass the Semipalatinsk departments of East Kazakhstan Oblast (54 per cent), Pavlodar Oblast (39 per cent) and Karaganda Oblast (7 per cent).

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Strengthening United Nations action in the field of human rights through the promotion of international cooperation based on the principles of non-selectivity, impartiality and objectivity

Report of the Secretary-General**

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* A/55/150.

** In accordance with General Assembly resolution 54/248, sect. C, para. 1, this report is being submitted on 24 July 2000 so as to include as much updated information as possible.

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I. Introduction

1. The General Assembly, in its resolution 54/174 of 17 December 1999, requested the Secretary-General to ask Member States to present practical proposals and ideas that should contribute to the strengthening of United Nations action in the field of human rights, through the promotion of international cooperation based on the principles of non-selectivity, impartiality and objectivity; and to submit a comprehensive report on the question at its fifty-fifth session.

2. Pursuant to the above request, a note verbale was sent to States Members of the United Nations requesting their views on the subject. As at 20 July 2000, replies had been received from three Member States: Belarus, Costa Rica and the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya. The present report has been prepared on the basis of the replies received. Any further replies received will be reflected in an addendum to this report. It will be recalled that two previous reports prepared on this question were published in 1993 and 1999 (documents E/CN.4/1993/30 and A/54/216 respectively).

II. Replies received from Member States

3. The reply of **Belarus** read as follows:

"The Republic of Belarus has consistently supported the efforts of the United Nations to develop regional and universal cooperation in the field of human rights and welcomes the steps taken by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights to provide advisory assistance to Member States of the Organization in developing national plans for the promotion and protection of human rights.

Belarus makes active use of the experience of Member States of the United Nations, as compiled by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, in order to develop and implement national programmes for the further improvement of the observance of human rights.

In our country we have adopted and are implementing a national plan for the development of education in the field of human rights up to 2004, and programmes such as 'Children of Belarus', 'Women of Belarus', 'Basic Trends in State Family Policy' and so forth.

Work is currently in progress on an integrated national programme of action for the protection of the rights and freedoms of citizens in the process of establishing a civil society in the Republic of Belarus. Thus, on the basis of the experience of special programmes targeting particular population groups, a qualitative transfer to the national level is taking place.

The experience of Belarus demonstrates that one of the keys to achieving the maximum positive impact from the implementation of national plans and programmes in the field of human rights is to clearly define objectives and specific time-frames for attaining them. A focus on results, rather than on the fact that particular measures are being taken, is an essential precondition for public confidence in the intentions of the State once it has adopted a national programme of action in the field of human rights.

In that connection, the advisory assistance of the specialized institutions of the United Nations system is clearly essential for the development of criteria and methods for verifying the results of the implementation of such national programmes.

There is also an urgent need to enhance the role of the United Nations as a forum in which the Member States of the Organization can exchange experience in the development and implementation of national programmes in the field of human rights. The adverse consequences of the impact of the process of globalization on human rights must be offset by purposeful regional and universal cooperation to promote and defend human rights; that might, in particular, be achieved through coordination and joint implementation by interested States, at the regional level, of national plans in the field of human rights."

4. **Costa Rica** in its reply provided information on the work of the International Cooperation Division within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, on the objectives of the work of that Division and on particular projects funded through international

cooperation. The objectives of the International Cooperation Division included: following up on cooperation policies forming part of the foreign policy of the Government of Costa Rica; consolidating the technical and administrative structures for negotiating all activities concerned with technical cooperation; strengthening action between developing countries with respect to technical cooperation; coordinating the regional mechanism for Central American technical cooperation; controlling and evaluating the technical cooperation projects executed in Costa Rica; disseminating information in Costa Rica and, for donors, the work carried out in the field of international cooperation; and analysing, evaluating and overseeing the scholarship programmes for Costa Ricans studying abroad. Details were provided regarding those technical cooperation projects either to be completed, currently being executed or finalized within Costa Rica since 1998, together with information on sponsoring, financing and the ministry responsible for the projects. This covered the areas of gender and the situation of women; administration of justice; electoral assistance; childhood and youth; humanitarian assistance; disabled persons; employment; indigenous people; and migrants affected by hurricane Mitch.

5. The reply of the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya read as follows:

> "The Libyan Arab Jamahiriya firmly believes in the importance of maintaining impartiality, objectivity and non-selectivity in the international community's consideration of the question of human rights and of dealing effectively with human rights violations, with a view to ensuring that this issue retains a purely humanitarian character, promotes human relations and enhances the social standards of all peoples and is not used or exploited as a pretext for the attainment of political ends, the exertion of pressure on any State or intervention in its internal affairs. It therefore supported General Assembly resolution 54/147, which reaffirms the importance of ensuring the universality, objectivity and non-selectivity of treatment of this humanitarian issue and prevention of its exploitation in the service of the political interests of specific States.
>
> Although the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action and numerous other United Nations decisions emphasize that States should be guided by these principles in the active consideration of the promotion and safeguarding of human rights, treatment of this issue at the international level does not extend beyond the use of human rights by certain Western States as a pretext for imposing political or economic pressures on specific States in the South. Thus, we see them subordinating them to their own interests and raising the slogan of human rights whenever they feel that they risk losing hope of achieving these interests. They are not concerned about human rights violations, however grave, and the Middle East and some other regions of the world are viewed as clear exemplars for the application of double standards in dealing with such issues. This is confirmation that the international community has been unable to attain the goal to which it aspires, namely the actual safeguarding and protection of human rights through cooperation, constructive dialogue and mutual assistance between States and the rejection of modes of conduct based on confrontation, condemnation, coercion and interference in the internal affairs of States."